

Voices: Suicide: If you are thinking about leaving, please stay

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Suicide and depression rarely are discussed in church contexts. When they are, it's in hushed tones behind closed doors or far from those holy halls of the church building.

Suicide and depression are viewed as badges of shame, a blazing and bright red letter declaring the lesser worth of its bearer.

We are terrified of our brokenness, but today, we will not shrink from the shadows that haunt us. We will shine light on them for all the world to see in their hideous, skulking horror.

Today, I hope to look you in the eye—metaphorically speaking—and tell you no matter how those shadows plague you and mercilessly pull you down into the mire of despair, this life is worth living.

I want to ask you to do something.

Please stay.

The texture of despair

I know painfully well the desire to leave—the desire to escape, to be free of all these chains weighing me down and choking the life out of me, chafing at every inch of exposed skin every waking moment and rendering each movement an exercise in masochism.

I know well that expressionless, worn face staring back in the mirror, gazing emptily into its hollowed-out eyes that scream, "I can't do this anymore;" the fear; the pain; the exhaustion; the seemingly unending despair.

There is the inescapable sense something is wrong with you, a constant faint buzzing at the back of your skull that periodically reaches a fever pitch, screaming so overwhelmingly, piercingly, that you can't even hear the person next to you show their love, no matter how loud or undeniable it is.

Something is wrong, but not in the way you think. Something is wrong in the same sense something is wrong with a diabetic. You are sick, and that's OK.

It's not your fault. It doesn't make you less worthy of love, nor does it make you less loved by the God who loves perfectly.

It doesn't mean your faith is weak or that you're a bad Christian, and it isn't a sin to be depressed. Your pain is a result of the fallenness of the world, but it isn't itself sin. You don't deserve it.

I believe

I want you to know nothing wrong in this world is unending. All things will be made right and made new.

Maybe that seems like an empty promise or another Christian platitude with no power behind it. But I believe it.

I believe God will set all things right, because he loves us enough to set all things right.

I believe with all my heart, one day, I won't even remember what a tear

feels like running down my cheek, and my mind will be trustworthy again.
The same goes for you.

I believe this pain that aches down to the marrow of your very bones is as temporary as any other.

So, please stay.

What I can and can't say

I can't tell you when it will stop. I can't promise you it will ever stop entirely in this life. It hasn't happened for me yet, and I don't know that it ever will.

I can tell you God is there in it, whether you feel him or not, and so are the people who love you, because they love you whether you believe it or not.

I can tell you your feelings do not dictate reality.

I can tell you, whether on the other side of this darkness or in the midst of it, there is beauty to be found that will leave you breathless, if you just stay long enough to see it.

Every little win counts

Cherish the tiny victories.

Every time you drag yourself out of bed, despite being held down by the gravity of the knowledge there is nothing for you outside of those bedroom doors and the sense you have nothing to wake up for, you are a victor.

Every time you force another bite of food into your mouth, even though it turns your stomach, you are more than a conqueror.

Every time you smile, laugh or tell a joke in the face of the void looming over you—and mean it—you are a warrior refusing to lay down her sword against overwhelming odds.

Every time you admit you're hurting and it all seems too much, instead of lying that you're fine, you're flexing your muscles to demonstrate to all the world you are not weak, and you will not be smothered or hidden away from others by your own thoughts.

All of this is hard. All of this is worth it.

My hopes

My hopes are twofold. Indirectly, I hope to give those who never have experienced depression or suicidal thoughts an idea of what it's like, because I don't know if it is possible to understand until you've experienced it. That's why I sincerely hope no one reading this understands.

For those of you who do understand, I hope it reassures you or encourages you—or at the very least, makes you feel less alone. You are not alone.

We are not without hope. We are not a burden. We are not invisible. We are seen. We are valued. We are loved. We are worth healing.

Please stay.

See the sun rise.

Please stay.

NOTE: If you or someone you know is depressed and/or contemplating suicide, [To Write Love On Her Arms](#) is a place to find help.

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